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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 000146

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FOR WHA - A/S VALENZUELA, ALSO FOR S/GWI - AMBASSADOR  
VERVEER, S/CT, AND EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/05/2020  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#) [HA](#) [IR](#) [SP](#) [XM](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SOLOMONT'S FEBRUARY 4, 2010, MEETING  
WITH SPANISH FIRST VP FERNANDEZ DE LA VEGA

REF: A. MADRID 133  
[1](#)B. MADRID 49

Classified By: Ambassador Alan D. Solomont, Reasons 1.4(b),(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador paid his first call on Spanish VP Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega February 4, [1](#)2010. They discussed the U.S.-EU summit and Spain's hopes for a bilateral visit by President Obama; Haiti; Afghanistan; Iran; Latin America; Counter-Terrorism, including data protection/information sharing; and the Fifth Meeting of Women for a Better World. End summary.

U.S.-EU Summit  
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[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador Solomont thanked Fernandez de la Vega for GOS officials' constructive response to the news that President Obama would not be coming to Spain for a U.S.-EU summit (ref a). He noted he made clear to the press this is not a measure of U.S. regard for Spain or Europe. The VP said the GOS is disappointed but joked "you owe us one." More seriously, she said the GOS is now focused on working on a bilateral visit by President Obama. She said such a visit needed substance and admitted that perhaps Spain had not prepared the U.S.-EU summit as well as it might, leaving aside questions of President Obama's busy agenda. In order to achieve a bilateral visit, Fernandez de la Vega said the Presidency and MFA are working on concrete agenda items where Spain and the U.S. can make meaningful progress, making a visit to Spain later in the year worth the President's time.

Haiti  
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[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador thanked the VP for Spain's response to the disaster in Haiti and for her personal role in organizing the Spanish response. He noted the Spanish Ambassador to Haiti had recently visited him to express his gratitude for U.S. help in his medevac. The Ambassador said he wrote President Obama to let him know of Spain's appreciation for the U.S. assistance. Fernandez de la Vega recounted her conversation in Montreal with Secretary Clinton and said Spain is focusing on the success of the donors' conference in New York. The Ambassador made a strong appeal for additional Spanish support for MINUSTAH, noting the UN is trying to round up reinforcements at this critical juncture. The VP said that while in Haiti she had met with the UN SYG and MINUSTAH. She assured the Ambassador that Spain was supporting MINUSTAH and sending police reinforcements. She noted the arrival of a Spanish hospital ship in Haiti. She also said Spain is going to participate in an assessment team visit to be launched soon, in advance of the New York donors' meeting. (Note: The Ambassador also discussed MINUSTAH reinforcement with Spanish Minister of Interior Rubalcaba -- ref b -- and the DCM followed up with Rubalcaba's Chief of

International Affairs February 3 to reiterate the importance of Spanish support).

#### Afghanistan and Iran

14. (C) The Ambassador thanked the VP for the GOS commitment to increase its troop presence in Afghanistan. He assured her he wants to help explain to the Spanish public the importance the effort there not just to the U.S. but to Spain and Europe as well. Fernandez de la Vega mentioned her recent public comment about the possibility of negotiating with Taliban elements that were willing to renounce violence, but made an impassioned plea that any accord with the Taliban must include meaningful protection for the rights of women, whom she noted had suffered terribly under the Taliban. The Ambassador agreed that this had been one of the most horrible aspects of the Taliban regime. He noted Secretary Clinton is leading an effort to rejuvenate U.S. diplomacy and development programs and said that it was amply proven that investing development assistance in women and girls yielded tremendous results. He complemented the GOS for its commitment to gender equality. The Ambassador stressed the need for Spain and the U.S. to work together on a response to the Iranian nuclear program; Fernandez de la Vega agreed that the issue is of the highest importance.

#### Latin America

15. (C) Turning to Latin America, Fernandez de la Vega noted

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she had an excellent meeting with A/S Valenzuela earlier in the week. She said Spain wanted to work with the U.S. in the region. She stressed that Latin America, a region she visits every year and where she has wide contacts, has high expectations of the Obama Administration. She agreed with the Ambassador that Spain and the U.S. should coordinate development assistance in the region and argued that the way to deal with Venezuela and its allies is for Spain and the U.S. to work with responsible countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Chile, and Colombia to occupy the political space which Venezuela hopes to occupy. She said Spain and the U.S. can triangulate efforts with countries such as Mexico, Brazil, or Chile. The Ambassador noted Spain's efforts to influence Latin American countries on climate change in advance of Copenhagen as an example of how the U.S. and Spain can work together in the region to achieve mutual objectives.

#### Counter-terrorism

16. (C) The Ambassador stressed the importance of continued CT cooperation. Fernandez de la Vega agreed, noting Spain is a country with long and sad experience fighting a domestic terrorist group. She said the success against ETA in recent years is largely due to improved cooperation with France. Spain therefore understands very well the importance of international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. The Ambassador noted that data protection/information sharing is a U.S. priority and urged Spain to do all it could to save the TFTP agreement. Fernandez de la Vega agreed that information sharing has to be a priority. The terrorists have to know there are no borders. She said the European public has many misconceptions about information sharing. One of the urgent task facing governments is to help the public understand that a proper balance between individual rights, including privacy, and CT cooperation is possible and necessary. Fernandez de la Vega noted three Spaniards had recently been kidnapped by AQIM. She said she leads the GOS task force on the hostages and thanked the Ambassador for the excellent cooperation the U.S. is providing. She said that once the three hostages are freed, Spain and the U.S. should have a serious conversation about what they can do to face

the rising threat of terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel.

The Ambassador agreed, noting the focus on AfPak does not mean the U.S. is not concerned about the terrorist threat in other regions.

#### Fifth Meeting of Women for a Better World

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¶7. (C) Fernandez de la Vega explained she would be host March 27-28 in Valencia the fifth meeting of the organization Women for a Better World, an initiative Spain had started with Africa but now hopes to expand to other regions. She said she invited Secretary Clinton last fall, and in Montreal had made a personal plea for her attendance, promising to structure her involvement in whatever way seems useful to the Secretary. She noted the President of Liberia, former PM of Mozambique, and Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai, among others, will attend.

#### Comment

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¶8. (C) Fernandez de la Vega is one of the most powerful people in Spain. Zapatero often uses her as his political enforcer, and she seems to be in charge of every task force created to deal with a controversial or high profile issue, be it terrorist kidnappings or Haiti disaster relief. Her blunt manner does not always make a good first impression, but she is someone senior USG officials should continue to engage as A/S Valenzuela did this week. We gauge her receptivity to increased cooperation in Latin America and the Sahel to be genuine and worth pursuing. She was impassioned in her plea for Secretary Clinton's attendance at the Fifth Meeting of Women for a Better World in March. We recognize the extreme demands on the Secretary's time and understand a video greeting for the conference may be in the works. We also encourage Washington to consider sending a high-profile substitute if in fact the Secretary cannot attend.

SOLOMONT